AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. **(Currently Amended)** A picture coding method of coding a plurality of pictures included in a picture signal for generating a coded picture signal ~~in the following manner:~~ by coding each of predetermined pictures as an entry picture without reference to another ~~picture;~~ picture, and coding each of the pictures other than the entry pictures with reference to another coded picture, ~~wherein the picture signal is processed per access unit which is made up of a plurality of pictures including the entry picture, and~~ the picture signal including an access unit within which a picture located after the entry picture in coding order is able to refer to a picture located before the entry picture in coding order, the access unit being made up of a plurality of pictures including the entry picture, the picture coding method comprising~~comprises~~:

a selection step of selecting, using a selection unit, a target access unit;

a first reference restriction step of restricting, using a first reference restriction unit, ~~in a target access unit to be processed~~, in the case where a first access unit including a first entry picture is selected in the selection step, so that a post-entry picture located after the first entry picture in display order within the first access unit refers to another picture except for: ~~the following pictures: a picture~~ (1) all pictures located before the first entry picture in coding order; and (2) a forward reference pre-entry picture which is located before the entry picture in display order within the first access unit and refers to a picture located before the first entry picture in coding order; ~~and~~

a second reference restriction step of restricting, using a second reference restriction unit, ~~in an access unit immediately following the target access unit,~~ in the case where the first access unit including the first entry picture is selected in the selection step, within a second access unit including a second entry picture, so that a pre-entry picture located before the second entry picture in display order refers to another picture except for: ~~the following pictures: a picture~~ (1) all the pictures located before the first entry picture ~~in the target access unit~~ in coding order; and ~~a~~ (2) the forward reference pre-entry picture ~~in the target access unit, which refers to a picture located before the entry picture in the first access unit in coding order.~~, the second access unit immediately following the first access unit; and

a reference structure information coding step of coding, using a reference structure

information coding unit, in the case where the first access unit including the first entry picture is selected in the selection step, reference structure information indicating an access unit processed as a target access unit for which the first and second reference restriction steps have been executed.

2. **(Currently Amended)** The picture coding method according to Claim 1,

wherein in the first reference restriction step, another picture is used for reference except for: ~~the following pictures: a picture~~(1) all the pictures located before the first entry picture in coding order; and ~~a~~ (2) all pre-entry ~~picture~~ pictures located before the first entry picture in display order within the first access unit~~order~~, and

in the second reference restriction step, another picture is used for reference except for: ~~the following pictures: a picture~~(1) all the pictures located before the first entry picture ~~in the target access unit~~ in coding order; and ~~a~~(2) all pre-entry ~~picture~~ pictures in the ~~target~~ first access unit.

3-4. **(Canceled)**

5. **(Currently Amended)** The picture coding method according to Claim 1~~3~~, further comprising:

~~a reference structure information coding step of coding, per access unit, each reference structure information indicating whether or not the first and second reference restriction steps have been executed for each access unit processed as a target access unit; and~~

an insertion step of inserting each reference structure information corresponding to each access unit into said each access unit included in the coded picture signal.

6. **(Currently Amended)** The picture coding method according to Claim 1~~3~~, further comprising:

~~a reference structure information generation step of generating each reference structure information indicating whether or not the first and second reference restriction steps have been~~

~~executed for each access unit processed as a target access unit; and~~

~~a reference structure information~~ an output step of outputting the reference structure information ~~generated in the reference structure information generation step~~, by attaching the generated information to the coded picture signal.

7. **(Currently Amended)** The picture coding method according to Claim 6, further comprising:

an insertion ~~a coding/insertion~~ step of coding each identification information for identifying each reference structure information corresponding to each access unit, and inserting said identification information into said each access unit included in the coded picture signal.

8. **(Currently Amended)** The picture coding method according to Claim 5~~3, further comprising~~:

wherein the reference structure information indicates a range of reference for each picture included in each access unit.

~~a reference structure information coding step of coding, per access unit, each reference structure information indicating a range of reference for each picture included in each access unit; and~~

~~an insertion step of inserting each reference structure information corresponding to each access unit into said each access unit included in the coded picture signal.~~

9. **(Currently Amended)** The picture coding method according to Claim 8~~3, further comprising:~~

wherein information indicating the range of the reference is information indicating, per access unit, a range of reference for each post-entry picture included in each access unit, and a range of reference for each pre-entry picture included in an access unit immediately following said each access unit.

~~a reference structure coding step of coding, per access unit, each reference structure information indicating a range of reference for each post-entry picture included in each access~~

~~unit, and a range of reference for each pre-entry picture included in an access unit immediately following said each access unit; and~~

~~an insertion step of inserting said reference structure information corresponding to each access unit into said each access unit included in the coded picture signal.~~

10-17. **(Canceled)**

18. **(Currently Amended)** A picture coding apparatus for coding a plurality of pictures included in a picture signal for generating a coded picture signal ~~in the following manner:~~ by coding each of predetermined pictures as an entry picture without reference to another picture; and coding each of the pictures other than the entry pictures with reference to another coded picture, ~~wherein the picture signal is processed per access unit which is made up of a plurality of pictures including the entry picture, and~~ the picture signal including an access unit within which a picture located after the entry picture in coding order is able to refer to a picture located before the entry picture in coding order, the access unit being made up of a plurality of pictures including the entry picture, the picture coding apparatus comprising~~comprises~~:

a selection unit operable to select a target access unit;

a first reference restriction unit operable to restrict, ~~in a target access unit to be processed~~, in the case where a first access unit including a first entry picture is selected by said selection unit, so that a post-entry picture located after the first entry picture in display order within the first access unit refers to another picture except for: ~~the following pictures: a picture~~(1) all pictures located before the first entry picture in coding order; and (2) a forward reference pre-entry picture which is located before the entry picture in display order within the first access unit and refers to a picture located before the first entry picture in coding order; and

a second reference restriction unit operable to restrict, in the case where the first access unit including the first entry picture is selected by said selection unit, in an access unit immediately following the target access within a second access unit including a second entry pictures~~unit~~, so that a pre-entry picture located before the entry picture in display order refers to another picture except for: ~~the following pictures: a picture~~(1) all pictures located before the first

entry picture ~~in the target access unit~~ in coding order; and ~~a~~ (2) the forward reference pre-entry picture ~~included in the target access unit~~, which refers to a picture located before the entry picture in the target access unit in coding order, the second access unit immediately following the first access unit; and~~order.~~

a reference structure information coding unit operable to code, in the case where the first access unit including the first entry picture is selected by the selection unit, reference structure information indicating an access unit processed as a target access unit for which the reference has been executed by the first and second reference restriction units.

19. **(Canceled)**